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10 April 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director-Designate of Central Intelligence

FROM: SA/DCI

SUBJECT: Meeting with Deputy Secretary of State, 11 April 1986

1. You are scheduled to lunch with Deputy Secretary of State Whitehead and Director/INR Abramowitz at 1230 on 11 April 1986 in the DCI Dining Room.

2. The following agenda items have been coordinated with State Department:

TAB A



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TAB B

Libya and Terrorism. State expressed an interest in reviewing the bidding on this subject, so I included a copy of the 9 April talking points prepared for your meeting with the President.

You will also recall the NODIS cable on 10 April from Amb. Burt asking for an intelligence brief he can release to senior FRG officials. This subject may arise at the lunch.

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TAB C      The Amal-Syrian-Hizballah Triangle. This TAB contains talking points on this subject from DI/NESA. Key points are:

- Despite all-out Syrian efforts to prop up Nabih Barri and Amal, Hizballah is making steady inroads in W. Beirut and S. Lebanon at Amal's expense;
- Hizballah is cooperating with the Arafat faction of the PLO to Syria's frustration;
- Hizballah's willingness to attack Israel and its growing strength in the South could provoke a Syrian-Israeli clash;
- Syria is handicapped in its efforts to control Hizballah because of its Iranian backing.

TAB D      Potential for Israeli-Syrian Conflict. State indicated an interest in discussing this subject and to that end I have included the talking paper on this subject from NIO/Warning.

As you know, the bottom line here is that John Bird believes that the conjunction of various factors could spark a new conflict:

- Israeli belief that the U.S./Libya conflict has increased U.S. tolerance for Israeli military action;
- Syrian air defense activities which impede Israeli intelligence gathering;
- Continuing Syrian efforts to reoccupy its old positions in Lebanon;
- Growing influence of Hizballah;
- Potential for Assad to miscalculate Israeli reactions to his moves.

TAB E



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For your background I have included talking points from NIO/AL on the Pakistan nuclear issue should Abramowitz raise it.



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## Talking Points for the DCI

9 April 1986

## The Amal-Syrian-Hizballah Triangle

Nabih Barri's reelection as Amal chief last week reflects Syrian determination to keep him in that position despite a steady decline in Barri's appeal within Lebanon's Shia community. His primary rival boycotted Saturday's Amal Congress and Hizballah sympathizers within Amal did not try to depose Barri.

- The Syrians turned out Barri supporters in the Bekaa Valley and West Beirut and made it clear to Barri's rivals within Amal that they wanted Barri at the top of Amal.
- We don't see the election as terribly significant. The real challenge to Barri comes from the Hizballah and the inroads it is making inside Amal. [REDACTED]

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The Hizballah continues to grow at Amal's expense both in West Beirut and in southern Lebanon. We believe the Hizballah is biding its time, quietly building its network by seducing recruits and militiamen away from the Amal. We estimate the Hizballah's current military strength at 5,000 to 6,000 fighters, which is comparable to Amal's strength.

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- Many Amal officials opposed to Barri--including key Amal commanders in Beirut and the south--discreetly cooperate with the Hizballah. [REDACTED]

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The Syrian leadership is alarmed at the growth and assertiveness of the Hizballah. Continued Hizballah gains at Amal's expense could threaten Syrian interests in Lebanon, and Damascus has increased pressure on the Shia radicals.

- The Hizballah has been cooperating with pro-Arafat Palestinians.
- Given the Hizballah's willingness to attack targets inside Israel, its control of the border area could

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provoke an Israeli response that might lead to  
inadvertent clashes with Syrians. [REDACTED]

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Syria is reluctant to attempt a full-scale crackdown against  
the Hizballah.

- Even though the Hizballah's goals run counter to Syrian  
interests, Damascus welcomes the groups anti-Israeli  
operations.
- Syrian forces in the Bekaa are unable to move against  
the Hizballah network in West Beirut or southern  
Lebanon.
- Damascus does not want to damage relations with Iran,  
the Hizballah's most important foreign supporter. [REDACTED]

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DCI Talking Paper  
Potential for Israeli-Syrian War

As we wrote for you on 16 January, there is substantial cause for concern that the Israelis will initiate a major military action this year of at least the scale of the 1982 campaign against Syria, probably within the next six months. Since our earlier note to you, the pressures on Israel for such an action have continued to build, and some of the constraints may be lessening. Tel Aviv, for example, may see the constraint against attacking a neighbor to be lessened by international approval of the US's recent actions against Libya.

- Israel's sweep last month through southern Lebanon appears to have radicalized the populace further and given the Hizballah greater dominance in that area, at the expense of the more moderate Amal. Already Iran and Palestinian guerrillas have capitalized on this situation to promote new cross-border operations, particularly rocket attacks, into northern Israel.

- Syria again has deployed mobile SA-6 and SA-8 missile units into the Bekaa Valley, and is building two new SA-2 sites—covering the central Bekaa—near Zabadani on the Lebanese border, bringing the total number of SA-2 sites to four.

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These developments follow continued Syrian movement of reinforced mechanized infantry further south in Lebanon, and January's placement of a third SA-5 site 40 kilometers from the Golan Heights. This SA-5 site probably will become operational this month and will cover much of Israeli airspace and provide improved high-altitude coverage of Israeli approach routes.

From Israel's perspective, these developments almost certainly appear to be further steps in Syria's campaign to drive Israel out of Lebanon and establish dominance in the region. At a minimum, limited military action against Syrian air defense capabilities seems inevitable, because Tel Aviv remains firmly committed to prevent yielding control over Lebanese airspace, and even more so over Israeli airspace. Perhaps more important from the Israeli perspective is its unwillingness to allow any Arab neighbor to achieve dominance because of the destabilizing effect it would have. In the Israeli view, conditions may now call for action greater than an air campaign.

Assad's Calculus: Damascus' activities—which demonstrate significant progress in its military capability since 1982—are an escalation of the Syrian challenge, which Israel undoubtedly sees as a gradual erosion of its perceived strength.

- From Syria's side, the absence of a major Israeli reaction to Assad's moves in the past six months seem to be encouraging the usually cautious president to believe he can manage step-by-step challenges to Israel in a way that will leave him in control.

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This increases the already substantial risk of confrontation that would escalate rapidly out of Assad's control. Assad knows Syria is not ready for war, but--buoyed by the success of his hardline policies toward Israel--Assad may believe Syria is on the verge of successfully and fully eroding Israeli influence in Lebanon.

- Assad may well have miscalculated the impact of the US in restraining Israeli retaliation against Syria so far, and thus be overly confident of his "military" successes.
- If there were war, Assad's military objectives would realistically not be to defeat Israel in a military confrontation, but to perform sufficiently well so that the strategic realignment already underway in the Arab world--as the result of Syria's greater dominance in Lebanon--proceeds and negotiations with Israel on the Golan Heights begin on the basis of Syrian-perceived equality.

Although neither side appears to want a general war, there is a substantial probability--now greater than one in three--that conflict on a large scale will break out in the next six months or so. For Israel, the perception is growing that Syria's political presence in Lebanon is part of a deliberate and successful effort to establish a "Greater Syria". This almost certainly presents an intolerable situation for Tel Aviv. From the Syrian perspective, Assad--while knowing he is not fully prepared for war--probably feels sufficiently assured that he can control escalation to achieve limited military goals that he perceives are necessary to establishing full control of Lebanon.

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Date: 10 Apr 86

TO: DCI

FROM:

SUBJECT:

REMARKS:

Attached is the material  
for TAB "E" of the  
State lunch book.

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